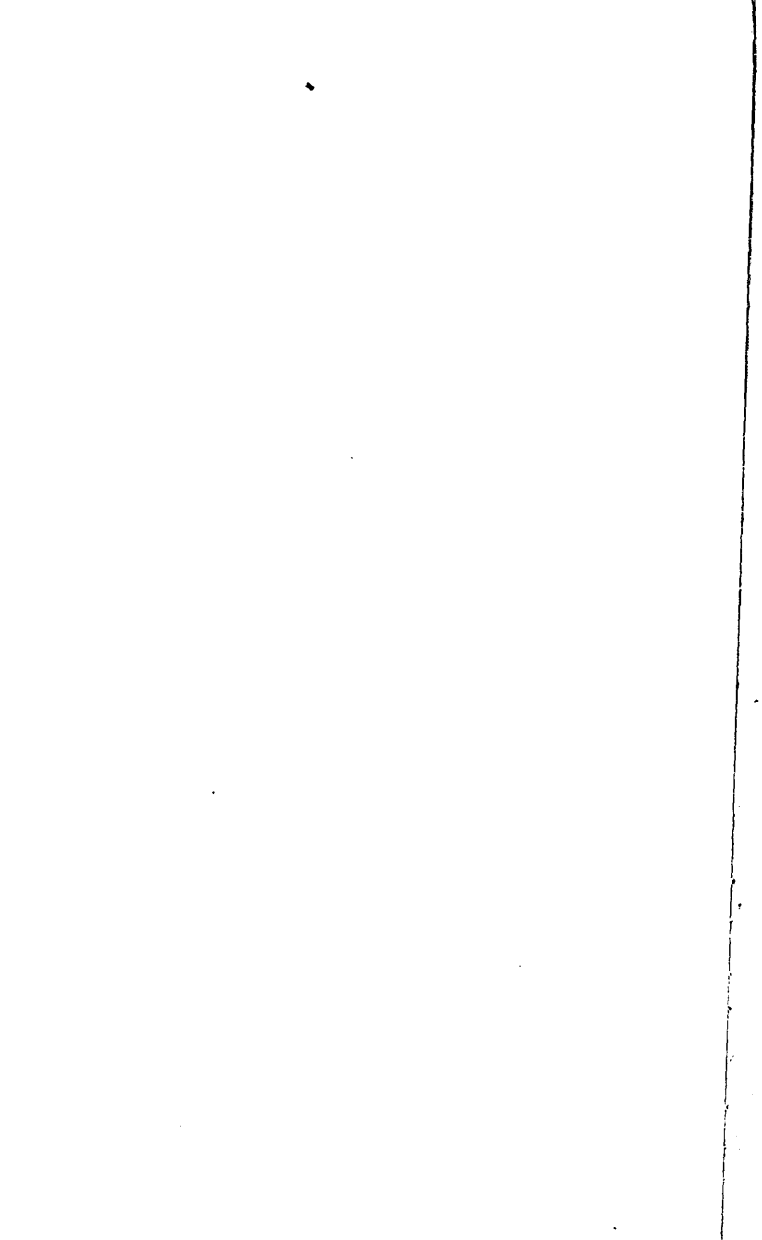




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THE
DISCIPLINE OF TEMPTATION
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Other Thoughts for Lent and Holy Week.

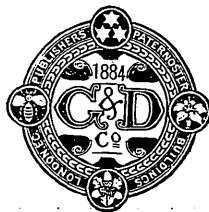
BY

HENRY SIDEBOTHAM, M.A.

CHAPLAIN OF THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, MENTON,
AND CANON OF GIBRALTAR.

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THE short Sermons and Addresses which form this little volume were preached at Mentone in Lent and Holy Week 1883. Some of those who heard them, and who by God's blessing were helped by them, expressed a wish that they might be printed; and this is now done, with the earnest prayer that they may be made of use to others.

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SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

—1 *Thessalonians* iv. 1.

LENT is commonly and rightly regarded as a special season for repentance, but it is also a season for the commemoration of the Baptism, Fasting, and Temptation of Our Blessed Lord, Whose example we are called upon to follow, in going apart for a time from the world, and seeking closer communion with God.

Not the least important of the lessons which we learn from the Temptation of Christ is that temptation is permitted, nay, even ordered for us by God. Just as our bodily strength is increased by exercise, so our spiritual strength grows by use, and though temptation is never to be sought, never to be encountered unbidden or in our own strength, yet we should remember the encouragements of God's Word, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him,"¹ and the assurance that God will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.²

¹ St. James i. 12.

² 1 Cor. x. 13.

Temptation, thus regarded, is to us, as are all the trials and difficulties which come to us in life, part of a loving discipline sent to fit us for our true home, and every temptation met in God's strength will be to us a stepping-stone to higher things, and an assurance to us that we are partakers of Christ's victory, and that God is for us, and that none can be against us so as really to harm us: so that we may learn to say, "Now know I that the Lord helpeth His anointed, and will hear him from His holy heaven, even with the wholesome strength of His right hand;" while all such efforts should impress upon us more deeply the lesson that there can be no life without growth.

It is so in the world of nature. We know that all living things grow—that if a plant does not bud and sprout, if a tree does not put forth its leaves, it is dead; and so in the spiritual life, there must be growth: the Christian life is a life of growth; a life of progress. There is no conception of the life of God's children in Holy Scripture excepting as a life of growth, as a continual going forward in God's strength. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."¹ "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee, in whose heart are Thy ways; *they will go from strength to strength.*"²

Our Lord declared, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."³ He spoke of Himself as the Vine, and His disciples as the branches; of their abiding in Him as

¹ Prov. iv. 18.² Psalm lxxxiv. 5-7.³ St. John x. 10.

the condition of life, and of the bringing forth fruit, as the necessary consequence of that life.

There must be a continual increase of vitality if the life of the branch is to be maintained; and St. Paul carries on this thought when he speaks of the perfecting of the saints, of the work of the ministry, of the edifying of the body of Christ "till we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Now this is the lesson set before us. "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more."

Besides that self-examination to which we are invited at this season as to the nature and reality of our repentance—besides seeking earnestly to lay bare our hearts before God, and to discover by the help of His Holy Spirit what are the particular acts of sin of which we need to repent, and what are the sinful habits which must be rooted out, we are led to inquire what *progress* are we making in the Christian life? whether, having been taught how we ought to walk and to please God, we *are* abounding more and more in earnestness and steadfastness, in consistency of purpose and depth of spiritual life?

Remember that it is not a high view of the Christian life that it is to be wholly made up of falls and repentance. Falls there will be in the life of all, of different kinds and different degrees, undoubtedly to the end of

¹ Eph. iv. 13.

life, but they should become less frequent and less in degree. Humbled we must be to the end of life when we contrast what we are with what we should be, and the more we advance, the farther off shall we seem to be at times from the goal; for every growth in grace must bring with it clearer views of Christ and His Perfection, and as a higher standard is set before us, we see more clearly our own imperfection; and so the race of life goes on, not following a phantom shadow, but endeavouring to grasp a living reality, and learning, as we see it more clearly, how far we ourselves fall below it.

And as all religious acts and all religious ordinances are to us very much what we make them, so is it with the whole of life.

With some it is one long sad struggle: always tempted, always falling, even though, it may be, kept by God's grace from wholly falling away, yet never rising higher than the thought of escaping from the wrath to come.

With others it is walking in the light of our Father's love: doing all to His glory—seeking to do His will—to forward His kingdom—to bear witness to His truth.

With the one there may be, as with the other, the working out our own salvation, but it is all fear and trembling: with the other there is perfect love, which casteth out fear; and though there may be but few who have really attained to this higher state, is it not the aim set before us? "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."¹ "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."²

¹ St. Matt. v. 48.

² St. Luke xii. 32.

And are there yet others who know neither the joys nor the fears of the spiritual life—who have perhaps a form of godliness, but by their lives deny its power—who treat nothing seriously, and care for nothing—whose only thought is to please themselves—who excuse their wasted lives by saying that there is nothing to do, which is a sure sign that the tempter has found them employment? What can be said of such but that they have not begun to live: that what they call their life is but a living death, from which we pray that the voice of God may speedily awaken them?

And how may we hope to rise to the higher state? for we may be sure of this, that the end of our being is not merely to escape condemnation, but to live to the glory of God; to be as clearly on His side as He is on ours; to devote every power of soul and body to His service.

And if you ask, how can you do this? the answer will be but to remind you of what you have heard a thousand times before.

It is the use of opportunities: the striving to act from the love of God from the time we wake to the time we lie down to sleep: the effort to keep God in our thoughts throughout the day, even in the midst of the tiresome interruptions we meet with, or the cares and anxieties we have, or, which is perhaps the hardest of all, in the dulness of invalid life, varied only by some change of pain, or in the listlessness induced by too much leisure.

Still the effort may be made, and when made with an earnest prayer for God's help, it will never be made wholly in vain.

And then there are the opportunities of prayer, of diligent, earnest prayer : of the devout study of God's Word : of diligent and careful preparation for the Holy Communion, and our reverent and frequent reception of that Holy Sacrament.

And as we shall certainly never regret any effort made for a nearer approach to God, so we may all make one simple rule for Lent :—That we should watch for the opportunities which He gives us, and strive to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ ; and as we have received how we ought to walk and to please God, so, if we use these opportunities rightly, we *shall* abound more and more.

THE DISCIPLINE OF TEMPTATION.

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.

—*St. James i. 12.*

WHATEVER difficulties we may find in Holy Scripture, we may be sure that nothing in what is truly a revelation from God, can really contradict any other part of that revelation, even though at first sight it may appear to be contradictory to it. Very often such seeming contradictions arise from unduly pressing some one illustration, or some one aspect of a truth, to the exclusion of other considerations which ought to be equally weighed.

Thus with the subject to which our minds are especially directed in Lent, when, in commemorating the Temptation of our Lord, we are also led to consider the temptations which we ourselves endure, the encouragements which are given to us, and the reward of final victory.

Temptation is set before us in Holy Scripture under a twofold aspect. We naturally think first of that which connects it wholly with evil, both in its origin and in the manner in which it is presented to us.

Our minds are carried back to the days of man's innocence, when the tempter first appeared to Eve, and our thoughts of temptation are of the unmixed evil which has ever arisen from temptation yielded to.

And yet there is, as we have seen, another aspect of temptation, in which we find it a stepping-stone to higher things. It is true that in thus regarding it we often change the word and call it trial, but when we do so, it is often rather in regard to the source to which the trial is traced than from any difference in the facts of the case.

We are told that God did tempt Abraham, and in the trials of his descendants we see that mysterious blending of temptation and trial which teaches us of a discipline of the soul, sometimes arising from those trials which we readily admit to be chastenings sent to us in love, sometimes from temptations arising distinctly from the great enemy of our souls, but still permitted by God.

For God permits temptation ; nothing can happen without His permission : and when we remember that the temptation of Our Blessed Lord took place immediately after His Baptism—after the Holy Spirit was seen descending upon Him, and the voice of the Father was heard saying, “This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased :”¹ when we remember that it was *then* that “Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil,”² we learn something of that mysterious double aspect of temptation, in which it is at once a trial permitted or even ordered by God, and a temptation to evil, in which the evil comes wholly from the enemy of our souls.

This distinction is clearly marked in the words of the text and in the verse which follows it—“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation : for when he is

¹ St. Matt. iii. 17.

² St. Matt. iv. 1.

tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God : for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man.”¹

Thus while we are clearly shown from the histories of Abraham, of David, of Job, of St. Paul, as well as from the history of Our Lord, that God permits temptation, we are especially warned of the danger, and of the sin, of excusing ourselves for any yielding to temptation, by confounding the trial which is ordered for us with the evil to which we are tempted.

Every trial may become a temptation, and every temptation certainly involves trial ; but when we speak of trials, we mean properly, that an opportunity is given to us of doing right or wrong, and that we are being tried or proved. When we speak of temptation, we regard the same facts, but we imply that there is a power inclining us to evil. As Bishop Wordsworth observes, “God tries men that they may rise ; Satan tempts them in order that they may fall.”

Into whatever perils we may come, we have the assurance that our Heavenly Father is watching over us in love, guarding us in the hour of trial, limiting the power of the tempter, making a way to escape, that we may be able to bear the temptation: always hearing that prayer which we have been taught to pray, “Lead us not into temptation ;” and if still we are brought into temptation, then, if we have prayed in faith, we may further pray, with perfect confidence that our prayer will be answered—“Deliver us from evil.”

¹ St. James i. 12, 13.

All temptation may be regarded as opportunity. It is, alas! treated as opportunity by those who yield to it.

Every temptation is an opportunity for self-indulgence. There is something in us, some appetite, some desire, some propensity which finds its opportunity, otherwise there would be no temptation: and often the temptation is veiled, just as the tempter sought to veil the suggestions which he made to Christ—suggestions to vindicate His position as the Son of God, to show His power, to claim His kingdom: "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." "Cast Thyself down hence;" "fall down and worship me," and all shall be Thine,—no humiliation, no suffering, no cross.

And thus he tempts us now. Think not of the future, but *here* and *now* take what is offered for present ease, for selfish enjoyment, for working out your own ends, your own purposes.

We know how steadfastly, may we not say how patiently, as Man, for man's sake, our Holy Saviour met the tempter step by step. How He treated each temptation as an opportunity not for sin, but for victory over sin by the Sinless One; and this not only because He could not sin, but also for our sakes.

And so in like manner every temptation is an opportunity for us.

The temptation is known of God: His angels behold us, and are at hand to strengthen us: the temptation is an opportunity to gain a victory for Christ,

and to show ourselves His faithful soldiers: and whether the temptation is what the world would count a great one, some temptation of ambition, the temptation of an easy success through some sacrifice of principle, or the temptation of some great gain through the neglect of commercial morality, or the temptation of gaining popularity by seeking to please rather than to be bold in speaking the truth: or whether in the more ordinary temptations which come to us all, of a hasty temper, or some strong passion, or some reproach to be borne, or the trial of a cross of pain and suffering, or uncongenial duty: be the trial or temptation what it may, there is the opportunity given us of serving the Lord Christ, as true soldiers of the Cross.

And though these are not the opportunities which we should seek, nor such as we should choose for ourselves, it is certain that they will come to us, and it is in these that God makes trial of us as to whether we will serve Him or not. It is in the use which we make of these that we can show our earnestness and sincerity: it is for these that we must watch, certain that if we use them rightly, and regard each temptation as an opportunity for serving God, we shall not be left with these alone, but other opportunities will be given to us for spiritual strength and refreshment, for growth in grace, and for a nearer approach to God.

And whilst we find the greatest encouragement in the knowledge that our Holy Saviour is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, that He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, let us re-

member that we can only follow Him by the way of the Cross, by daily self-denial, by unceasing watchfulness and prayer. That God permits us to be tempted, is an assurance to us—so long as we never go knowingly or wilfully into temptation—that He is never far from us, that He will never suffer us to be tempted above that we are able.

But this thought is no encouragement to sin, no palliation of it. It should not diminish, but rather increase our penitence; for nothing can be more certain than that we need not have sinned.

“Whatsoever is born of God,” writes St. John, “overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”¹ Therefore let us live as the children of God, in humble dependence on His word, and trusting to His promise, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.”²

¹ 1 St. John v. 5.

² St. James i. 12.

TRUST IN GOD.

But He answered and said, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

—*St. Matthew iv. 4.*

IN the first answer of Our Blessed Lord to the tempter we find the assertion of a principle on which the other temptations were encountered—a principle which may supply us with a rule of life in regard to all those temptations which we ourselves from time to time encounter.

The words used by Our Lord are the more remarkable, because they are a quotation from the Old Testament. He met temptation just as we are taught that we should meet it, and in this very fact we have the greatest encouragement.

The fact that He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, is the deepest assurance of His unfailing sympathy.

The fact that He met the tempter with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is the greatest encouragement, as teaching us, that if we encounter our temptations with the same weapon and in His strength, we shall meet with a like victory.

In the words which Jesus quoted there is a reference to that incident in the wanderings of the Israelites, when, cut off from ordinary and natural supplies of food, they were fed by manna, which came down to them from heaven, so that, in the words of the Psalmist,

“Man did eat angels’ food, for He sent them meat enough.”¹ And in that solemn repetition of the history of the forty years’ wanderings which was spoken by Moses to the children of Israel as they lay encamped below Mount Pisgah, he showed the reasons for God’s dealings with His people.

1. He had humbled them by showing their dependence upon God.

2. He had taught them a lesson of His love and of His bounty in providing for their need.

And this teaching is often repeated in Holy Scripture, of the great Living Will by Whose word the world was created, and by Whose continuous work it is upheld—that He Who sent down manna from heaven, and He Who fed the multitude at Capernaum, is the same Who year by year raises the seed-corn into the waving harvest. “When Thou openest Thy hand, they are filled with good; when Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled.”² So sang the Psalmist, and so it is still: but is there not too much reason to fear that it is often forgotten, and that, with all our boasted civilisation and scientific progress, there is yet a danger of losing that trust in the living God, which is the only strength of a nation, as it is the only hope of the individual Christian?

It should not be so; for all true knowledge, all real scientific discovery, should make us more reverent and more humble, as God reveals those things in the natural world which have beforetime been kept secret.

There are two pictures set before us in Holy Scripture—that of a man who said in his heart, “There

¹ Psalm lxxviii. 26.

² Psalm civ. 28, 29.

is no God,"¹ and, "To-morrow shall be as this day and much more abundant,"² and—for it is the same character throughout—of him who said to his soul, "Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;"³ and, on the other hand, the picture suggested by the words of Our Holy Saviour—words full of peace and comfort, teaching the true rest of the soul—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."⁴

And this is the teaching of the manna—that we should learn to trust God for each day, as each day comes.

Day by day, an oft-repeated lesson—that we are not to look beyond the day. We may see cares, and troubles, and anxieties before us; and we are not to be careless, or improvident, or cowardly in refusing to look things in the face, but we are taught to *trust*.

An old philosopher's definition of cowardice is "the expectation of evil,"⁵ and it might have been a Christian definition; for though we are taught that this life cannot be free from trouble, that trial and sorrow will have their place in our lives, yet remember also that we are taught as plainly that the Lord's mercies are new every morning—that his compassions fail not—that the joy of the Lord is our strength,—that even though sorrowful, we are to be always rejoicing, and that as the manna was given, enough for the day as each day came, and when the seventh day was coming, enough for that extra day, so will it be in our

¹ Psalm xiv. 1.

² Isaiah lvi. 12.

³ St. Luke xii. 19.

⁴ St. Matt. vi. 33, 34.

⁵ Ἰπποδοκία κακῶν.—*Aristot., Nic. Eth.*, book iii. 6.

lives, if we trust ourselves, simply and utterly, into the hands of our loving Father in heaven.

For there is a lesson here of a higher life—the life which is hid with Christ in God.

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”¹

Not by bread alone, but by every *word*: and we may with all reverence derive here a precept for one very practical side of the Christian life, and learn that it is not so much what we *do* for others, as the way in which we do it—the sympathy we show, and the kind words and looks, and the feeling of sincerity inspired—which can do that work which Our Lord and Master has intrusted to us.

It is the lesson of the “more excellent way:”² the spirit of Divine love which must pervade our acts, our words, aye, and our very thoughts, as the spring of both, without which the greatest efforts and the greatest sacrifices will be worthless.

And as we come to think of this higher life, of this spirit which must be in all we do, we see that we are really speaking of one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, of the very first; for St. Paul says, “The fruit of the Spirit is *love*, joy, peace.”

And thus our thoughts are directed to that of which the manna was a type, the Bread of Life, which is Our Lord and Saviour Himself. The very origin of the name “Manna” was, as you know, that the Israelites asked, “Manna?” (what is it?)—and the answer was given by Moses: “This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.”³ But Christ is the true Manna,

¹ St. Matt. iv. 4.

² 1 Cor. xii. 31.

³ Exod. xvi. 15.

who said, "I am the Bread of Life." "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die."¹

Thus we are directed to the highest source of our strength, and to the assurance that if we seek to be united to Christ in that Holy Sacrament which He has ordained for our spiritual renewal and refreshment, we are made partakers of the Divine nature; and in the strength thus given to us, we *can* meet the tempter when he comes to us, even as Our Lord met him, and overcome, even as He overcame.

And then, instead of thinking daily of our troubles, we shall learn to think more of our blessings.

Many have much sorrow in life, many trials, much to endure: some seem constitutionally less happy than others; but all should be able to say, "In the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart, *Thy* comforts have refreshed my soul."²

For there are new mercies each day: each day is a new day given us in which to serve God and to seek His glory, and there is strength assured to us for the day—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be."³

Day by day we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." "Day by day we magnify Thee," is our daily song of praise. So let our service go forth thankfully and joyfully to meet God's blessings, until our little day of life comes to its appointed end, and if we have been faithful in the few things here, we are called to a higher service and to a fuller joy.

¹ St. John vi. 35, 49, 50. ² Psalm xciv. 19. ³ Deut. xxxiii. 25.

THE SIN OF PRESUMPTION.

Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.—*St. Matthew iv. 7.*

IN the second answer of Our Blessed Lord to the tempter, we again find a quotation from the Old Testament, and a reference to the wanderings of the Israelites, when the people, having pitched in Rephidim, just after the giving of the manna, found no water, and instead of seeking patiently and humbly for the relief of their necessity, they murmured against Moses and against God; and although Moses was commissioned to smite the rock in Horeb, and the water flowed out, and the people drank of it, yet the place was called Massah, "temptation," and Meribah, "strife," because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, and questioned His presence among them, saying, "Is the Lord among us, or not?"¹

We know how later, at Kadesh, Moses himself was tempted to transgress, and how (when he should but have spoken to it) he smote the rock a second time, which was to have been but once smitten, and for this transgression he was excluded from the Promised Land.

¹ Exod. xvii. 7.

It is but consistent with all that we read of this hero of the Old Testament that he murmured not at God's sentence on himself; but what deep meaning must he have felt in those words which he spoke to the Israelites from Mount Pisgah, "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted Him in Massah."¹

It was from these words that our Lord quoted, when the tempter, having failed in his endeavour to induce him to work a miracle for the relief of His own necessities, sought to allure Him to make a display of His Divine power by casting Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple.

There is this peculiarity in the second temptation, that the tempter, foiled by the sword of the Spirit, sought to forge a weapon from the same source. He spoke still in the language of implied doubt, "*If* Thou be the Son of God;" and added to his evil suggestion, "For it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone."²

The use made by Satan of these words is a warning as to the use of Holy Scripture. It has been said, with some truth, that you may prove anything from the Bible; and we may be sure that God's Word can only be rightly used when it is regarded with the deepest reverence: not quoted, like a line of Horace, to give a turn to a sentence, nor to add zest to an argument, and never quoted without due regard to the general sense of the whole passage from which the quotation is taken.

¹ Deut. vi. 16.

² St. Matt. iv. 6.

In the present instance, the omission of four words entirely invalidated the application of the passage.

The promise of God is to him who trusts wholly in God: who will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him will I trust;"¹ and the promise to such is, "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee *in all thy ways*."²

The ways here spoken of are the ways of obedience and duty, not the ways of presumption and self-seeking. Nowhere does God promise us protection under all circumstances. "His mercy is on them that fear Him," who walk in His ways, who keep His commandments, who fulfil His statutes; but there is no promise for those who walk in their own ways and who forget God's law.

The neglect of the conditions so plainly laid down is thus characterised by Our Lord in the rebuke with which He met the temptation: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

We may be sure that when Christ thus rebuked the tempter, in words which connected this temptation with that of the Israelites at Massah, some affinity between the two temptations was present to His mind. And in the inquiry as to what there was in common between them we may again find the assertion of a principle which will be a guide to ourselves.

At Massah, as we have seen, the Israelites strove with Moses because they wanted water. It was not their desire to satisfy their thirst in the wilderness which was a sin, but the spirit in which they asked for it—the rebellion of their hearts against God.

¹ Psalm xci. 2.

² Psalm xci. 11.

And so we learn, that though God cannot be tempted of evil, yet, in human language, it is to tempt God whenever we presume upon His mercy : whenever we act as if we might dare to dictate to the Most High as to the manner of His dealings with us, or assume that we may depart from the path which He has commanded us to walk in, and yet claim the fulfilment of His promises.

Thus God has promised His blessing on the endurance of temptation. He has bidden us not to fear, but to go on simply and manfully in the path of duty, in the assurance that He will be with us to strengthen us and to keep us from evil, so long as we put our whole trust in Him, and endeavour in singleness of heart to do His will. He has promised that whatever our trials, we shall not, so long as we thus walk in His ways, "be tempted above that we are able, but that He will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it."¹

But if we encounter temptation unbidden ; if we go into it needlessly, and for our own pleasure ; if we go into company where we know, in our hearts, that God would not have us go ; if we seek amusements, however attractive, and however plausibly they may be excused, which we know to involve harm to others, and therefore to be displeasing to God—nay more, if we take part in what we feel, at the best, to be very doubtful, and in which we cannot ask God to bless us, or bear the thought of God—what right have we to expect that God's protection will continue ? What, in truth, is our conduct but that sin of presumption

¹ 1 Cor. x. 13.

which was rebuked by Our Lord when He replied to Satan, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God"?

Or again, if we forget that whatever God has given us, whether our health, our time, our wealth, our talents, our opportunities, are our Master's goods, intrusted to us to be used for God's glory, and we use them recklessly, selfishly, carelessly; we place ourselves outside the limit of God's promise, and we tempt the Lord our God.

Or if we enter on any undertaking, or follow any line of conduct, from mere motives of expediency, thinking that we may do evil that good may come; if we once deviate from the path which has been marked out for us by God, we forfeit His protection, and we cannot look for His blessing, because we are tempting God.

And yet this is done constantly in a thousand different ways, and it is in these things that the tempter comes to us most frequently. It is the spirit of gambling—the law of chances, as it is called—to think that we may risk this or risk that, and so cast ourselves where we have no warrant, in the presumptuous hope that all will come right.

Still more are we guilty of this sin if we live in a false confidence as to our spiritual condition, indulging in what we know to be wrong, or, on the other hand, trusting in our own feelings, and assuming that if there are some things wrong in us, we shall be able to set them right whenever we choose, and that a time will come when we shall be able to give our hearts to God with less trouble.

There is no more dangerous delusion, because we

are taught very plainly, and all the experience of life confirms the truth, that so far from becoming easier to turn to God, it becomes more difficult as time goes on. Nothing is too hard for God, and whether early or late, all true conversion of the heart is the work of God's Holy Spirit; but there is that power of choice, that freedom of the will, which God has given us, and which we must never leave out of account: there is the strength of habit, which becomes more difficult to break.

And there is a certain general law in the spiritual life, that they who strive to realise their position as God's children, who seek for pardon through the blood of Christ, and pray constantly that they may live up to their high calling, are led on by the Holy Spirit from grace to grace, and from strength to strength; while those who neglect God's calls, and who go on in their own ways, and allow themselves in thoughts and words and acts which they know to be displeasing to God, do lose the help of His Holy Spirit. His voice is heard less clearly within them: their spiritual perceptions become dull, and they are in the greatest danger of being left to go their own way, because they have refused to walk in God's way, because they have sinned in presumption, and have tempted God.

It was so with Israel of old: "My people would not hear My voice, and Israel would not obey Me, so I gave them up."¹

May God in His great love keep us from so awful a condition! May He give us grace to obey His call

¹ Psalm lxxxi. 11, 12.

now, and to meet the tempter boldly in the strength of Jesus our Saviour ; and then, whether tempted to distrust, or tempted to presumption, or tempted with worldly advantages, we shall share in that victory which Christ won for us, and, resisting the devil, he will flee from us, and we shall have the blessings of our Saviour's presence, and the help of those holy angels who ministered to Him.

VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION.

Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan ; for it is written,
Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt
thou serve. —*St. Matthew iv. 10.*

No part of the history of our Lord's Temptation is of greater value to us than that which shows Him to us as a Perfect Man, tempted in all points like as we are. It brings home to us the assurance of Christ's sympathy when we remember that He *is* touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; that we rely not only on His supreme love for men, but also on that sympathy which arises from His experience, as Man, of the conditions of our humanity : and in that He suffered, being tempted, in that He too "was troubled, tempted, tried," He is abundantly able to succour them that are tempted.

And this is clearly shown as we follow the different steps of His Temptation. In what form the tempter appeared we are not told, but the strength and reality of the Temptation are made clear to us, and we may be certain that every guile and every power which have ever been employed against the souls of men were put forth in all their strength, in the vain endeavour to thwart those gracious purposes of love which had brought the Son of God to dwell on earth as Man.

In long fasting in the wilderness, where in solitude He held communion with His Father, and prepared for the work which had been given Him to do, the Holy Saviour had become faint and weary, and it was then that the tempter came to Him, with those suggestions of evil, which, though finding no resting-place in the mind of Christ, and instantly repelled with sharp decisive answers, drawn from the treasure-house of God's Word, yet, from the very evil of distrust and presumption suggested by the tempter, caused pain to the sinless Son of God, who suffered being tempted.

The third Temptation of Our Lord teaches us that the force of temptation does not diminish as life goes on. If in the Christian life a right use is made of the opportunities which God gives, so that, whatever our falls, there are yet, on the whole, a real growth in grace and a steadfast progress from strength to strength, we may indeed hope for that peace and quietness for which we daily pray. But we may be sure that there will never be a time, on this side of the grave, when we do not still need to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation, or when we dare for one moment think that we can be safe without the whole armour of God.

The three Temptations of Christ were of increasing strength.

He had refused to work a miracle for the relief of His own necessities, and He was tempted to work one to show His Divine power, and was urged to do this on the supposed ground of a Divine promise.

And then, when again foiled, the tempter sought

to allure Him by a prospect which seemed to touch more nearly on His great mission.

Whether Our Lord was taken to an actual mountain, whence the imagination was carried farther than the actual visible horizon, or whether, as has been suggested, "the whole of the temptation was in the region of which the spirit, not the senses, takes cognisance," we cannot tell. St. Luke tells us that "in a moment of time" the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them passed in review before the eyes of Jesus.

And as Satan had already quoted from God's Word, so he may now again have urged those promises which speak of the extent and glory of the dominion of Christ,¹ "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession,"² or "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth ;"³ or that the tempter whispered, "Gird thee with Thy sword upon Thy thigh ; ride on, and Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things."⁴ All was to be Christ's, the kingdom, and the power, and the glory ; but the way to them lay through suffering by the way of the Cross : and it is written of Christ, that because He overcame every temptation, because, though in the form of God, He stood not on His right to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and humbled Himself, "and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, *therefore* God hath highly exalted Him, and given

¹ Sermon on the Temptation by the Bishop of Winchester preached at Swansea Church Congress, 1879.

² Psalm ii. 8.

³ Psalm lxxii. 8.

⁴ Psalm xlv. 4, 5.

Him a name which is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”¹

All things are ours—far more, infinitely more, than the most successful worldly career can offer—more than the greatest wealth, the best satisfied ambition can give ; but our great inheritance, our crown, is also to be reached by the way of the Cross.

As it was with Christ, so now the Christian views the kingdom which is to be his : but there is a valley which is to be crossed between—the valley of humiliation, the valley of the shadow of death. The tempter would try to make us forget the valley, and think that we may live always on the mountain height, and that without cross or trial we may seize on the inheritance which has been promised to us.

But it is only by the same path which Jesus trod that we can attain to the fulfilment of His promise that where He is there shall His servant be.² “If any man will come after Me,” He says, “let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”³

And when we are tempted, if not by some open allurements, yet by some insidious temptation, which, veiled under an appearance of truth, would tell us that we are meant to enjoy this world, that we have duties here, the fulfilment of which, even though it should seem to gratify our ambition or our self-interest, must not be neglected, let us strive always to remember

¹ Phil. ii. 8–11.

² St. John xii. 26.

³ St. Luke ix. 23.

what Jesus did and suffered for our sakes, and ask ourselves, with a prayer for the guidance of His Spirit, what He would have us do, what He Himself would have done, so far as we may reverently think of Him as in circumstances like our own.

We know how He did meet the tempter when he now appeared more fully revealed than he had been before, as the prince of this world, how our Lord Jesus met him with a sterner, stronger rebuke, "Get thee hence, Satan ;" and then, again recurring to the written Word, He adds, for "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."¹

And as regards ourselves?—"Beloved," says St. John, "*now* are we the sons of God ;"² and if this thought were ever with us, the thought of our high calling, the remembrance that we are indeed God's children, and so dearly loved by God that He gave His Son to suffer and to die for us, the thought of the sympathy and strength of that dear Son of God, and His presence through the Holy Spirit, Who makes His temple in our bodies,—were these thoughts ever with us, how *could* we sin? For we should at once, at the first suggestion of evil, cast ourselves on His love and protection Who has conquered for us, and in Whose strength we cannot fail.

And as we are now led on from that season of preparation, which has formed the subject of our Lenten meditations to the close of our Lord's ministry, we are again called to gather round the Cross of Jesus, and to go with Him, in spirit, through that last solemn week of His ministry, to Calvary, and see Him,

¹ St. Matt. iv. 10.

² St. John iii. 2.

as the holy, sinless Lamb of God, offered upon the Cross for our redemption.

Let not this week be as any other week in the year to us.

If Lent has taught us anything of ourselves, of our sins, of our needs; if it has taught us anything of God's love, and of the sympathy and tenderness of our Holy Saviour, let us seek now to find the meaning of all as we kneel before the Cross.

Let us come day by day, with loving, tender hearts, praying in all simplicity, and in all deep earnestness,

By Thy fasting and temptation, by Thy Cross and
Passion,

God Lord, deliver us.

UNREAL WORDS.

And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David : Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ; Hosanna in the highest.

—*St. Matthew xxi. 9.*

EVERY day this week we read in the Gospels the history of the betrayal and sufferings of Our Blessed Lord, but it may help to bring more vividly before our minds the solemn events which we commemorate, if we select some special incident on each day, and try to lay to heart the lessons which it teaches us.

It is in this hope that I purpose to speak to you, if God will, for a few minutes each evening, that we may try to realise what was taking place in Jerusalem nearly 1900 years ago.

May the Holy Spirit be with us, that this week may be to us, not only in name, but in reality, a *Holy week* ; that as we watch our loving Saviour as He goes from Bethany to Jerusalem, and returns to Bethany, as we see Him in the Temple, on the Mount of Olives, in the Upper Chamber, at Gethsemane, on Calvary, and in the rich man's tomb, we may feel the reality of all that He did and suffered for us, and be prepared by thus watching with Christ to know something of Easter joy, by learning that Divine love

which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Excepting in the Evening Second Lesson, there was nothing in the services of Palm Sunday to remind us of the events from which that day has taken its name, but in our meditations on the events of this solemn week, we cannot omit all notice of so important a day.

The Sabbath had been spent at Bethany, in that house which Jesus loved, and on the first day of the week He made His public entry into Jerusalem. He had often before walked there from Bethany, and even in this week He walked again more than once from the great city to the village, and again from the village to Jerusalem.

But His entry to Jerusalem on this occasion was one of especial significance. It was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."¹ And when Jesus thus rode forth attended by the Twelve, there were two multitudes who gathered round Him—those who came to Bethany to see Him, and also to see Lazarus whom He had raised from the dead, and those who came out from Jerusalem to meet Him; and as Our Lord entered into the Holy City, the multitudes welcomed Him, crying, "Hosanna! Save, Lord, we beseech Thee. Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."²

¹ Zech. ix. 9.

² St. Matt. xxi. 9.

We know that these words were true of Christ—that He was, He *is* the Blessed One, the Son of David, Israel's true King. The words were true, and yet in the mouths of those who uttered them they were unreal words, because they sprang from a mere passing excitement, and not from any real faith; from no deep root in the hearts of those who spoke them. But four short days were to pass, and the cry of "Hosanna to the Son of David!" would be changed into cruel shouts of "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" And yet it is remarkable that Our Lord accepted this homage; for while grieving in the knowledge of what little value attached to this passing enthusiasm, while He foresaw most clearly His own approaching death and the coming desolation of the city over which He wept, He accepted every word that the disciples or the multitude had uttered concerning Him as being in the fullest sense true; and when "some of the Pharisees said unto Him, Master, rebuke thy disciples, He answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out,"¹—a proverbial expression, having possibly some reference to the language of the Prophet Habakkuk, "The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it."² "Even those lifeless stones," writes Isaac Williams, "would re-echo back the voice of Prophecy, which had sounded from the beginning of the world: even out of those stones He would raise up those true children of Abraham who should speak His glory: the living stones of His temple, which should never cease, day

¹ St. Luke xix. 39, 40.² Hab. ii. 11.

and night, to sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb."

The words of praise were true, and yet they were unreal : and here is the lesson for ourselves.

We use the most solemn words in confession, in prayer, in thanksgiving, in psalms and hymns : and these words which we speak to God are true : true of ourselves, as we speak of our sins and needs, true of God, as we speak of His mercy and love : and yet are not such words too often unreal? How often do we speak of ourselves as miserable sinners without the very least feeling of being miserable ! And if we say this is because we believe that our sins are forgiven, remember that though they are forgiven—and we can never be thankful enough for the certainty and the completeness of God's forgiveness,—yet, that great love of God wherewith He loved us should make us feel more deeply the misery of sin. And again, do we, if able to turn thus quickly to that blessed thought of our forgiveness, do we feel *real* thankfulness and joy, in the remembrance of God's mercy?

When our Lord Jesus Christ entered into Jerusalem, the people acted under an impulse of enthusiasm, but even the disciples knew not what they meant, nor understood that they were unconsciously fulfilling the words of prophecy. "These things understood not His disciples at the first ; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him." ¹

But we have Christ truly revealed to us. Imperfect

¹ St. John xii. 16.

as is our knowledge, still we have "the true Saviour set before us, the true reward, and the true means of spiritual renewal."

St. John declares that "the Son of God hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true;"¹ therefore we are without excuse if our words are unreal, or if we do not, at least, pray earnestly that we may be sincere.

That we can perfectly enter into the full meaning of every word we here utter before God may be beyond our human strength: that we may say more than we can feel is not necessarily a sin. St. Peter, when he said "Thou art the Christ," did not at the time apprehend the full meaning of his words; but he was sincere, and the words meant all that he could then understand. And so we do wrong, if, from a morbid self-consciousness, we shrink from using the words which the Church puts into our mouths; only let us use them with a constant effort to rise to their full meaning; and as we follow our Saviour through this week, let us pray that we may be kept looking steadfastly to Him, thinking of Him each day, and learning the truth as it is in Him, that so the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts may be acceptable in His sight, Who is our strength and our Redeemer.

¹ 1 St. John v. 20.

THE WOES OF HYPOCRISY.

Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

—*St. Matthew xxiii. 13.*

CHRIST spoke many words of blessing: few of denunciation. He who came to seek and to save that which was lost was the living embodiment of that love which He pictured in the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Good Shepherd.

For the weary, the sinful, the fallen, the sick, the sorrowful, for little children, for mourners, for the outcast, for every form of human weakness and suffering, He had tender words of encouragement and love.

There was but one class for whom He had only scathing words of denunciation and scorn—the proud and formal professors of religion, whose lives contradicted their creed, and who wrapped themselves contentedly in self-righteousness, satisfied with all that was outward, and narrowing down all religion to a hard, dry system, without truth and without life.

It was on the last day of the public teaching of Our Blessed Lord that He uttered those final warnings against the Scribes and Pharisees, before He left the Temple for the last time.

His public ministry had begun with the eight

Beatitudes, in that discourse in which He unfurled the banner of the Cross, and declared the character of those who should be its true followers, and now our Lord closed His teaching with the declaration of eight woes on those who were guilty of the sins of self-seeking and hypocrisy.

It has been said, with truth, that terrible as are the denunciations of the sins of the Pharisees, these sins are none of them what we commonly call immoral. They might all be committed by the most respectable people, and they are the more insidious, and we have the more need to lay to heart the warnings which they hold up to us, because they are compatible, as we see from the Pharisees, with all the outward appearance of a moral and religious life.

For how are these sins described? Look carefully at these woes pronounced in St. Matthew xxiii., and we see that they are sins of worldliness, sins of hindering the spiritual life of others, sins of unreality, of vanity and party spirit, sins of those who exalt the outward forms of religion, but neglect the real devotion of the heart, putting what is unessential and external above what is essential, and thus, while scrupulously observant of ceremonial purification, and having all the appearance of righteousness and holiness, were yet full of evil thoughts and evil passions, which filled their hearts with the vilest corruption. They disclaimed the deeds of their fathers, yet they followed in their steps; and, hating and persecuting what was good, they shared in their collective sin and guilt, and deserved the same punishment.

And though we may not appear to be tempted to

some of these sins, yet we all need the warnings which are here conveyed to us.

For what did the very name of Pharisee signify but "separated"? Originally a name of good omen; separation from the world, consecration to God! No higher ideal is set before us, so long as it is *the separation of the heart from evil*; the consecration of the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, offered in humble adoration and self-abasement. But when it came to be separation in the sense of standing off from brethren, saying, "I am holier than thou," the observance, not of the spirit, but of the mere letter of the law, then it was degraded into all that is most hateful in God's sight; the root of all party spirit, the depreciation of all that is spiritual.

For God loves unity because it is His own reflection. It was to make all men one, at one with God, at one with one another, that Jesus came into this world and shed His life-blood on the Cross, and the sins which He here denounced are hateful to God because they are most opposed to this unity.

And these sins, compatible, as I have said, with religious profession, are the more dangerous because they may have some hold upon us without our being really aware of it.

What is the remedy for such a condition? How can we be sure that we are not guilty of such sins?

By praying for the simplicity which is in Christ. As we have lately seen, the example of Christ helps us most when we think of Him as tempted in all points like as we are. When we think of Him, not only as the Eternal Son of God (as we *must* think of

Him, to learn the full teaching of this Holy Week and to know the full value of His atonement), but also as suffering weakness, hunger, thirst, weariness, desolation, sorrow, pain, and yet through all with one single aim before Him, to do the will of Him that sent Him, to finish the work which He gave Him to do.

And if we have the simple, earnest desire to do God's holy will, we shall not fall into the sin of hypocrisy. Our faith and love will be such as are described by St. Paul as "faith unfeigned," "love out of a pure heart,"¹ "love without dissimulation ;"² not making excuses for ourselves ; not acting a part, even though scarce consciously ; *not* keeping something back, and thus falling short of that full confession of sin, that complete surrender of self to God, which is the indispensable condition of our acceptance with Him.

As we saw yesterday the danger of unreal words, so we are warned this evening of the danger of unreal profession.

And if we are more fully convinced of our own ignorance and weakness, we are one step nearer to our only safety.

There are no promises to the double-minded, or to the proud, or to the self-satisfied. To such Christ Himself declares, "Thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked ;"³ but to the penitent and humble there are exceeding great and precious promises: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and

¹ 1 Tim. i. 5.

² Rom. xii. 9.

³ Rev. iii. 17.

are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ;”¹ and if we come unto Him confessing our sins, “ He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”²

For falsehood is the disease of which all sins of hypocrisy are the symptoms, and the remedy is simple Truth.

“ I have set God always before me, therefore I shall not fall,”³ says the Psalmist. May we have grace thus to live in singleness of heart, having but one aim in life—to act from the love of God—to do all things to His glory.

¹ St. Matt. xi. 28.

² i St. John i. 9.

³ Psalm xvi. 9.

ALONE WITH GOD.

Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone : and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.—*St. John xvi. 32.*

THE life of Our Blessed Lord on earth was, for the most part, one of intense loneliness. How lonely we, who are surrounded with all the blessings and encouragements of family life and friendship, can never tell; for in these we have that help which comes from congenial companionship; and also in all true homes, all in which that loved name of home is what it ought to be—a home in which Jesus is honoured and loved—we are sure to find a high standard kept before its members.

True that Christ did not need such a standard, seeing that He Himself is the standard for all, but in His human nature it must have been an additional trial, not to have one single human being who could in any sense whatever stand upon a level with Himself.

It is another proof of that full humanity of our Lord, which is so great an assurance to us of His sympathy; that He shrank from solitude.

Though a few scattered notices in the Gospels show us that to be much in prayer to God was the constant habit of the Saviour's life, rising up a great while before day, and departing into a solitary place

to pray there, spending whole nights on the mountains in prayer, departing from the multitude into a mountain to pray—yet He had, besides that great love for souls which made Him welcome all who came to Him, a love for human companionship. Even in the most solemn moments of His ministry, in the chamber of death, at the Mount of Transfiguration, in the Garden of Gethsemane, the three Apostles who with the family at Bethany formed the innermost circle of the friends of Christ were taken with Him; and there is no more touching proof of this yearning for human sympathy than that He craved to have some one near Him in the hour of His agony: “Tarry ye here, and watch with Me.”¹

Yet none could enter into His thoughts: there was not one who really understood all that He said; not one who could enter into His feelings or His great purposes of love.

There is no such loneliness for us. There are many who feel lonely, who complain of solitariness and want of sympathy, and those who are rich in the blessings of companionship should regard it as a sacred duty to alleviate the sadness of God's more lonely children; but we must not forget, if ever we think we feel such loneliness ourselves, that what we fancy a want of sympathy in others often springs from a want of sympathy in ourselves, from cold and selfish feelings, and an indifference to the interests of others.

Quite different was the loneliness of Christ; and though borne throughout His life on earth, it was

¹ St. Matt. xxvi. 38.

more keenly felt as the shadow of the Holy Week fell more deeply on the silence of the fourth day. For no record is left to us of the day which intervened between His departure from the Temple and "the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed."¹ This day appears to have been spent by Our Lord in retirement; some have thought in converse with His disciples at Bethany, though, had this been the case, it would have been probable that St. John, who gives such full accounts of the last discourses of Christ, would have left some record of what passed. Others have thought, with greater probability, that it was a day spent alone with God; that He abode in the Mount of Olives, there pouring forth His soul in communion with His Father, in preparation for all that was awaiting Him, when "He trod the winepress alone,"² and felt with pain the desertion of all who had professed their devotion to Him.

It was in the contemplation of this approaching solitude that our Lord turned to the thought which sustained His own human spirit, and which is full of comfort to all who are His; and when He said, "Ye shall leave Me alone," He immediately added, "and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."³

And if we learn to watch with our Holy Saviour in this week we shall learn—

1. That it is good for us to be alone with God. There is a disposition in some to withdraw from human sympathy and companionship; but this is not

¹ St. Luke xxii. 7.

² Isaiah lxiii. 3.

³ St. John xvi. 32.

a common fault. We most naturally cling to the sympathy of others, but a dislike for solitude may easily pass into a fault, and make us forgetful of the truth that there will come a time in our lives when we *must* be alone: when the love and sympathy on which we lean will be withdrawn, or when we ourselves shall be called to put off this present "garment of the flesh," and enter alone into that world of spirits, where are those whom we call the dead, but who are, in truth, always alive before God. Even there, if we are faithful, a blessed companionship with God's saints is promised to us, and, above all, the presence of our Lord Himself. And though there is the valley to be traversed alone—alone, as regards all human companionship—yet even there we have the promise, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."¹

2. If we learn now to be alone with God, we can never be really left alone. For the lessons of the Cross of Jesus teach us that we are never less actually alone than when we try, in human solitude, to realise the thought of God; for then we may be sure that He is near to us Who has felt a solitude deeper than any we have to endure, and Who will bring us, if we trust in Him, out of all the darkness, and weariness, and loneliness which can ever come upon us, into the marvellous light of His own love and His own presence.

The worst solitude is to be alone without God: to search for Him and not find Him: to search for

¹ Isaiah xliii. 2.

Him, and to find no comfort in the search. And when this is experienced, let us be sure that it arises from the want of casting ourselves entirely on God ; from thinking of ourselves instead of Him, and that we are restless and uneasy from want of confidence in Him : that it is because we do not come unreservedly to Christ, because we are trusting not in His work, but in our own, because we are not taking God's way, but trying to make a way for ourselves.

But God, Who gives Himself as our portion, can alone satisfy the longings which He has put into our hearts ; and He has promised that they who seek Him shall surely find Him ; nay, that He is even seeking us, looking on us in pitying love, desiring the gift of our poor hearts, and that we may learn to say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."¹

¹ Psalm lxxiii. 24, 25.

CHRIST THE CONSOLER.

I will not leave you comfortless : I will come to you.

—*St. John* xiv. 18.

LITTLE as Our Blessed Lord was understood by His followers, we can have no doubt as to their personal attachment to their Master.

As we approach the central event of this week, we may be apt to dwell, even too much, on their desertion of Christ. Not that it can possibly be excused, but because we cannot tell what we should have done. Have *we* never deserted Him? Have we never grieved Him by our sins, even if we have not crucified Him afresh, and put Him to an open shame?

At least let us beware of hastily condemning others, and remember that the Apostles had made real sacrifices, such as few make now. They had forsaken all and followed Christ, and this must be remembered when we remember also in this week that they "all forsook Him and fled."

But yet they loved Him : and it is a touching proof of the love of Jesus that He said so much to comfort them, when He knew what would be their conduct, and how little reliance was to be placed on their professions. He knew the desertion which would take place, and which He so keenly felt in anticipation, as He told them, "Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now

come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone : ”¹ and yet, none the less, He gave them the promise of a consolation which would remain with them for ever.

It may be a helpful thought for us this evening to be reminded how in this blessed work of consolation God the Holy Trinity acts towards mankind. There is often a certain danger lest in our endeavour to hold the Catholic faith of the Trinity in Unity we should forget, or confuse, the work of the One God revealed to us in Three Persons.

We naturally and rightly think of the Holy Ghost as the Comforter, but it teaches us much of the great love and tenderness of God when we remember that each Person of the Holy Trinity is called the Comforter.

God the Father is spoken of as the God of patience and consolation.² “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you,”³ He says by the Prophet Isaiah. It is God the Father who is spoken of by our Lord as sending the Comforter, showing that the Father is the source of comfort. And again, Jesus said, “He shall give you another comforter,”⁴ implying that He Himself is one: and of all the names by which the third Person of the Holy Trinity is known to us, “the Comforter” is most frequently used by Our Lord Himself.⁵

And although in this short address it is impossible even to attempt to enter on such a subject, we may observe that this thought of the revelation of God to

¹ St. John xvi. 32.

² Rom. xv. 5.

³ Isaiah lxvi. 13.

⁴ St. John xiv. 16. ⁵ Sermons by Rev. J. Vaughan, vol. iii. p. 265.

us as the Comforter helps us to understand all that is said by St. Paul of *Christ dwelling in us*. So far as we can at all understand how this can be, it is by the Holy Spirit that He dwells in us. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith,"¹ St. Paul prays for the Ephesians. "Know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates,"² he writes to the Corinthians.

It is therefore a truth of God's Word, revealed to us more than once, that Jesus is Himself the Consoler; and when His bodily presence was about to be removed from His disciples, He gave them a promise of an abiding Presence, which should be with them always. And this Presence was assured not only to them, but to His Church for ever: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."³

It was as the Consoler that Our Lord announced Himself very early in His ministry, when in the synagogue at Nazareth He applied to Himself the words of Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."⁴

Our Lord spoke to those who had heard that a Messiah was to come, and their words declared what would be the signs of the Anointed of God.

Doubtless you remember that beautiful picture,

¹ Eph. iii. 17.

³ St. Matt. xxviii. 20.

² 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

⁴ St. Luke iv. 18, 19.

entitled "Christus Consolator," in which the gifted artist has portrayed the Saviour surrounded by every form of human weakness and suffering, all being restored by the Holy Saviour, who came to bring healing and peace to mankind: a true picture of His ministry of love while on earth; a true picture of His blessed work as our great High Priest, pleading for us at the throne of God, and comforting us by His presence here on earth.

Christ is the Consoler, and we thus think of *Him* "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" as revealing the love of the Father; for it is in this great Week of the Cross, through all His weakness and suffering, that we trace the evidences of His supreme love, His unfailing sympathy, His all-availing power to save.

Christ is the Consoler of the penitent; and every feeling of penitence should be deepened in this week, as we follow the Lord Jesus in the last days of His Passion. As we see Him wearied with the contradiction of sinners against Himself, betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, forsaken by all; still more as we watch Him in His Agony, as we see Him before Pilate, before Herod, and on the Cross, we must be led to feel, not only how great must be His love for us, but how great must be our sin, which needed such an atonement.

Christ is the Consoler of the mourner, for He tells us that He is gone to prepare a place for all who are His, that where He is, there they may be also: that all who are united to Him and trust in Him are members of one body, and have a holy fellowship with Him, and with one another, unbroken by death.

“For I am persuaded,” says Paul, “that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”¹

Christ is the Consoler of all who will come to Him for consolation ; but we must look out and away from ourselves, always to Him, and to Him only : we must think more of our blessings and less of our trials : more of Christ and less of self.

Nor on this day² can we be unmindful of that most blessed and comforting means of grace which was instituted by Our Blessed Lord just before He spoke those words of consolation which we have been considering.

To come to Christ the Consoler is the first great need of all. We have all been brought to Him in infancy, but we need to realise our position as His members. To *abide* in Him is indispensable, if His consolation is to be lasting. If our souls are truly to be quickened by His Spirit, we must seek for that renewing and strengthening which He offers us in the Holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood. There, above all, are we brought near to Christ, and He to us : there we dwell in Him, and He in us : we are made one with Him, and He with us.

May we all come to that Holy Sacrament in a humble and thankful spirit, with true preparation of heart, that we may go in the strength of that heavenly food, until we come unto the Mount of God.³

¹ Rom. viii. 38, 39. ² Maundy Thursday. ³ 1 Kings xix. 8.

THE GREAT ATONEMENT.

God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.—*Romans* v. 8.

ALL human words must seem cold and poor in speaking of so deep a mystery as the death of Christ—perfect God and perfect Man! All else connected with Him is easily intelligible in comparison with His death—the death of One Who would seem to have nothing to do with death.

But here again we see the supreme love of Jesus, Who was tempted in all points like as we are, Who *is* touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We have tried, during Lent, to dwell on the help, and strength, and comfort which are given us by this knowledge; and as we think of temptation in the sense of trial, we see how this was carried on, even to the last great trial of our human condition. For death is the last great fact which we have to encounter in this world: it is death which levels all distinctions. Even a heathen poet could see that the palaces of kings and the cottages of the poor are placed on one and the same level by the common lot of all mankind;¹ and Jesus, in His acceptance of our humanity, shared this condition. He too died, laying down His life of

¹ Horace, Odes, i. 4.

His own free will ; and that He did so would in itself be a further proof of His great love and an assurance of His sympathy, even had no deeper meaning attached to the surrender of His life.

But He not only "tasted death for every man," that all might feel the assurance of His love, but He tasted the bitterness of death, that those who trust in Him should never know that bitterness. He came to do that which could never be done by the sacrifices of the law, and to offer that one, true, and perfect atonement of which they were but types and shadows.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we are taught the meaning of that great solemnity of the day of atonement, when the high priest entered once only in the year into the Holy of holies, and sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice before the mercy-seat, "the Holy Ghost thus signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest."¹ But when Our Lord Jesus Christ, the true High Priest, offered Himself upon the altar of the Cross for the sins of the whole world, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom, and thus it was declared that the way into the holiest was now opened unto all, through the blood of Jesus ; for "by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."²

And this great sacrifice, this perfect atonement or reconciliation, was offered by our Lord Jesus for every human being. He is the Head of the human race, and having taken the manhood into God, He died unto sin once, that all who have sinned might be

¹ Heb. ix. 8.

² Heb. ix. 12.

redeemed from sin, and being cleansed through the precious blood of Christ, might also die unto sin and live unto God.

May the full meaning of this merciful atonement come home to our hearts: our own deep need of it, our own deep interest in it. All our lives we have probably all, or most of us, been taught it; many, I trust, have long thankfully received it, and yet its lessons need ever to sink more deeply into our hearts, that the power of Christ's death may be felt in our lives.

The *power* of His death! Yes! for in all that weakness, and patient suffering, and that giving up the ghost which we have been watching on the Cross, there is the secret of the power of Christ. In the eyes of the world all seemed lost, the little flock scattered and the Good Shepherd smitten, and yet the true power of all life and righteousness and holiness for men begun, as it had never been on earth before.

And we too, if we could enter into the power of Christ's life, must seek to know the fellowship of His sufferings, and learn, with St. Paul,¹ that God's strength is made perfect in weakness—that it is only in proportion as we are emptied of self that we can be filled with the power of God, and that not even our love for Christ can uphold us, unless it be a love which we have received from God, as one of the fruits of His Holy Spirit.

We may not understand the mystery of the atonement, but we cannot doubt that love which "God

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

commends," or proves, "to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."¹ May the power of His redeeming love come home to our hearts, that we may know the truth—the truth that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—and that the truth may make us free.

So may we obtain all the benefits of the atonement of Christ, and being reconciled to God, know Him as our merciful and loving Father, readily obeying His will, walking in the glorious freedom of His children, believing that in the great work of this day our sins have been blotted out, and that "forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before," we may "press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."²

¹ Rom. v. 8.

² Phil. iii. 13, 14.

PARADISE.

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them. —*Revelation* xiv. 13.

Up to yesterday evening, we have followed Our Blessed Saviour through the steps of His Sacred Passion, and have seen Him shed His life-blood for us on the Cross. To-day we commemorate His further participation in the last conditions of our humanity, in His burial in Joseph's tomb.

But we are called not merely to watch by His Sepulchre with the faithful women who had loved and tended Him. We have a fuller revelation given to us, and not only have we the joy of His Resurrection before us, but we are allowed reverently to follow Him in thought, even on this day, into that world of spirits into which He passed, as He bowed His head and gave up the ghost.

For although there is not much revealed to us of the world beyond the grave, yet we must believe that God has told us as much as it is good for us to know, and quite sufficient to give us much hope and comfort.

We learn that the state of the departed in Christ is an intermediate state ; it is not heaven itself, but a state in which the soul is possessed of consciousness,

in which the life which has existed in the body is continued without interruption.

The use of the word "sleep," in connection with death, has led at times to an erroneous idea that the soul remains unconscious until the Resurrection. The body is laid to sleep, but the soul lives before God. The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob is not the God of the dead, but of the living, "because all live unto Him."¹ "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord;"² and when Our Lord, in answer to the petition of the dying malefactor, said, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise,"³ we see clearly that what He promised was, that that very day he should be with Him in the Paradise of joy and delight, where the Saviour Himself was about to join the souls of the righteous, who were awaiting their perfect consummation and bliss; and all this is entirely opposed to the idea of an unconscious state.

Therefore we are taught that not only is it a state of consciousness, but a state of happiness, for there is freedom from all sin, and full communion with the fellowship of the saints.

Nor can we doubt that there is the power of recognition granted in that spirit-world.

All are alive before God. "To-day shalt thou be with Me," was the promise to the penitent, and as we cannot doubt that the Saviour was known to all as He entered Paradise, so we cannot doubt but that the penitent knew Him too as he entered after Him, and that He was in turn known by others.

¹ St. Luke xx. 38.

² 2 Cor. v. 8.

³ St. Luke xxiii. 43.

And if any should further ask *how* recognition will take place, and feel the difficulty of conceiving the existence of the soul in a conscious state independently of the bodily organs of sense, we may remember that even now it is not the eye of the body, properly speaking, which sees, but the soul sees through the eye, and there exists even now a spiritual capacity of seeing, hearing, and speaking, which may find its operation and act without the organs of the body.

But we shall do best not to perplex our minds with questions which are impossible of solution here, and rather thankfully accept the testimony of Holy Scripture, which gives us so blessed a hope, so strong an assurance.

It is a state of rest. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labours."¹ In an earlier chapter of the Apocalypse,² the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God are not represented as in heaven, but they cry from under the altar; and though white robes are given them, they are bid to rest for a little season, till their fellow-servants and their brethren should be fulfilled.

And there seems to be a contrast shown between the state of the souls in Paradise and the state in heaven. In the one we are told, "they rest from their labours;" in the other, "they rest not day and night:"³ the one would seem to be a state of preparation; the other, one of full activity.

And so Our Lord went through the whole appointed course of man—death, burial, and the intermediate

¹ Rev. xiv. 13.

² Rev. vi. 9.

³ Rev. iv. 8.

state—expressed in the words of the Creed by “He descended into hell.”

St. Peter further tells us that “He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.”¹

Bishop Horsley,² whose interpretation is followed by the present Bishop of Winchester,³ and by the Bishop of Bedford,⁴ understands St. Peter’s words to mean, that “being put to death in the flesh, but quick in the spirit,” that is, His surviving in soul the stroke of death which His body had sustained; by which, or rather “in which,” that is, in which surviving soul, He went and preached to the souls of men in prison, or in *safe keeping*; for this is what the word translated “prison” really means, so that the passage would therefore teach us that our Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed to the “souls of the dead the glad tidings that their redemption had been fully effected, that Satan had been conquered, and that the great sacrifice had been offered up. If angels joy over one sinner that repenteth, may we not suppose Paradise filled with rapture when the soul of Jesus came among the souls of His redeemed, Himself the Herald of His own victory?” “The mention of those who perished in the Flood may be as an example of those in the Old Testament who were cut off by a sudden destruction, but of whom we have no reason to think that all perished for ever;” knowing that each would be dealt with in God’s justice and God’s love.

But the chief lessons are clear from this and the other passages to which I have referred: that Jesus

¹ Peter iii. 19.

³ Browne, Art. iii. p. 96.

² Sermon xx. vol. ii. p. 168.

⁴ Plain Words, 2nd Series, p. 120.

while dead in body was alive in spirit ; that He went to the spirits of the dead, and proclaimed to them that His work of salvation was accomplished.

Lessons full of hope and comfort ! leading us on to the thought of the Resurrection morning, when waiting will be over, and there will be a fuller joy than we can picture in the vision of God.

Now we see through a glass darkly, the dim reflection of the glory which shall be revealed ; but let us at least be sure that we are living with our faces really set towards Jerusalem, remembering that here we have no continuing city, and seeking one to come—"a city which hath foundations, whose Maker and Builder is God."¹

Let not the Week of the Cross pass from us without an earnest prayer that it may have brought to each of us some real gain in the spiritual life, some deeper conviction of sin, some nearer approach to Christ. And then we may hope to know something of Easter joy, in thankfulness of heart and life, rising with Christ to a higher, holier life.

¹ Heb. xi. 10.

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